

United Nations

Press Release

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TUESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- + Secretary-General recommends that Security Council extend mandate of United Nations Iran-Iraq Military Observer Group for further period of one month, until 28 February.
- + Security Council concludes round of consultations on Persian Gulf crisis.
- + Human Rights Commission adds question of human rights situation in Kuwait to its agenda; hears statements by delegates of Iraq and Kuwait.
- + Secretary-General appoints Ji Chaozhu new Under-Secretary-General for Technical Co-operation for Development.

Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar has reported to the Security Council that both Iran and Iraq have given firm indications to the United Nations Iran-Iraq Military Observer Group (UNIIMOG) that they remain determined to implement fully in due course the remaining tasks of the Force.

In his report to the Council of 28 January, the Secretary-General stated that he therefore recommended the extension of the UNIIMOG mandate for a further period of one month, until 28 February, so that the Group "may fulfil completely its important responsibilities".

Mr. Perez de Cuellar noted in the report that the fact that the parties had not proceeded according to schedule was "clearly not due to lack of commitment on either side", but was a consequence of the outbreak of hostilities in the area. He said Iran and Iraq had confirmed that they would continue to count on UNIIMOG's presence and assistance.

The Secretary-General further reported that, because of the current level of hostilities in the area, UNIIMOG had decided to temporarily relocate its Baghdad component outside Iraq.

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The Security Council is expected to hold consultations tomorrow afternoon on the extension of the UNIIMOG mandate.

The Council will also hold consultations tomorrow afternoon on the Secretary-General's report on the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) with a view to a formal meeting Thursday morning on an extension of UNIFIL's mandate.

The Security Council has ended its latest round of consultations on the Gulf conflict with no formal meeting of the Council in prospect. The request for a formal meeting, put forward last week by the Union of the Arab Maghreb and supported by the Sudan, Jordan and Yemen, was supported by Cuba today.

Talking to correspondents after yesterday's consultations, the Ambassador of the United States, Thomas R. Pickering, said Council members did not feel it was an appropriate time to have an open meeting of the Council, but that consultations on the subject would continue.

Also talking to correspondents, the Secretary-General was asked about his reaction to yesterday's letter from the Iraqi Foreign Minister accusing him and Member States behind the Security Council resolutions on the Gulf situation of responsibility for "heinous crimes" against Iraq. Mr. Perez de Cuellar replied that he preferred not to react to the letter at this moment. He added that he had to reflect on whether it was worthwhile to give an answer to the letter at all.

In another development, the Government of Iraq has maintained that the United States is to blame for the recent oil spills in the Persian Gulf causing environmental damage in the region.

In a letter to the Secretary-General, Iraq accused the United States of furthering the damage by bombing oil pipelines and intake and regulatory valves. The letter claimed that the United States bombings started a fire and caused more oil to spill into the waters of the Persian Gulf. Iraq said it was doing all it could to put out the fires, to stop the oil spills and to "mitigate the effects of the crime perpetrated by the United States".

Meanwhile, Kuwait has stated in a letter that, by polluting the environment and causing the disaster in the Gulf, the Iraqi regime has once again demonstrated its contempt for marine and human life. It said events clearly showed that the operation was undertaken by Iraq for purposes of sabotage.

In another communication, Iran has informed the United Nations that a number of Iraqi military aircraft have made emergency landings inside Iran. In a letter to the Secretary-General, the Iranian Ambassador reiterated Iran's "non-engagement in the present hostilities" and warned belligerent parties to refrain from any use of Iranian airspace. He said Iran had registered a strong protest to the Iraqi Government about the emergency landings, and had

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informed them that it would not allow the use of military vessels and personnel in Iran to any of the belligerent parties until hostilities were terminated.

A letter from Israel has called on all members of the international community to condemn Iraqi military attacks on that country's population. The Israeli Ambassador said that four people had died and 169 had been injured during the missile strikes. Israel reserved its right to call for a meeting of the Security Council as well as its right to act in self-defence, he said.

In a statement transmitted by the Permanent Representative of Tunisia, the Tunisian President, Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, said the destruction and devastation of Iraq were "on the verge of becoming intolerable" and that he could not, in any way, accept the turn of events in the Gulf.

The Tunisian President stated that punishing the Iraqi people was a political mistake and an error of judgement. The Security Council resolutions concerned the liberation of Kuwait, not the destruction of Iraq. Consequently, the battlefield was not to extend beyond the boundaries of Kuwait, he said.

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The United Nations Human Rights Commission, which began its current session yesterday in Geneva, today added the question of the human rights situation in occupied Kuwait to its agenda.

Speaking on the decision, the Iraqi delegate said he could support such a move if it meant the discussion of brutal raids by American and allied forces on civilian, cultural and religious targets in Kuwait. If, however, it was an attempt by the United States and its coalition to take advantage of the United Nations to blacken Iraq's name, he would oppose it.

The United States, he continued, used its veto in the Security Council on issues relating to Palestinians in the occupied territories; yet, thousands of tons of bombs were being used against the Iraqi people in the name of international law.

The representative of Kuwait said the Gulf crisis contributed to violation of Palestinian rights in the occupied territories. He said the media focused attention on people fleeing Kuwait instead of on the question of Palestinian rights. The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), he added, had to provide financial assistance to Palestinians in Kuwait who were no longer in a position to help their families in the occupied territories. The Kuwaiti statement was interrupted three times by the Iraqi delegate, who said it deviated from the agenda item.

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The Secretary-General today announced the appointment of Ji Chaozhu of China as Under-Secretary-General for Technical Co-operation for Development. He will succeed Xie Qimei who has served the Organization since 1985.

China's Ambassador to the United Kingdom since 1987, Mr. Ji has also been his country's Ambassador to Fiji and, concurrently, to Kiribati and Vanuatu. He served as Minister Counsellor at China's Embassy in the United States from 1982 to 1985.

From 1975 to 1982, Mr. Ji was Deputy Director, Department of International Organizations and Conferences, and later, Deputy Director, Department of American and Oceanic Affairs, at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. He was Counsellor of the Liaison Office of China to the United States from 1973 to 1975.

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